



## MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE

**LINDA McCULLOCH**

SENATE State Admin

Exhibit No. 2

Date 2-6-2013

Bill No. SB 206

SB 206: Allow Electronic Voter Registration  
Senate State Administration, RM 335  
February 6, 2013 @ 3 PM  
Secretary of State Linda McCulloch's Testimony

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, members of the committee. For the record, I am Linda McCulloch, Montana Secretary of State. I am asking for your full support of Senate Bill 206, which would allow Montana citizens who possess a valid Montana driver's license or Montana ID card to apply for voter registration online.

Thank you Senator Wanzonried for sponsoring this legislation, and for supporting my effort to ensure every eligible Montanan has ample opportunity to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

Our elections rely on an accurate voter registration system. Advancing the technology to provide voter registration online will help to ensure a more cost-effective and efficient system with minimal errors.

Unlike the current (and antiquated) paper-based system, online voter registration eliminates the need for counties to manually enter voter registration information into the statewide database. This saves a considerable amount of time and money, while increasing the accuracy of Montana's voter lists. It would also eliminate incomplete applications which require a lot of follow-up work by the counties, as an individual would not be able to submit the application online until all the required fields are completed. This will increase the number of registrants in Montana, and also improve the state's voter turnout.

Just about everywhere in Montana, and in the U.S., people are filing secure documents online. We pay our bills and taxes online, do our banking online, update our driver's license and registration online, and file many of our important business and personal documents online. One thing we can't do online in Montana, is register to vote.

Across the nation, government budgets are strained - and an increasing number of states are tightening their belts by improving online access to various types of election information. Eighteen states have already passed online voter registration. An additional nine states are considering bills similar to this one.

Reports from the states that offer online registration show savings of millions of dollars over the years. Additionally, the upfront costs associated with building and installing an online system were typically recouped within the first two years.

While the cost-savings are impressive, this bill is about more than just money. Allowing Montana citizens to apply for voter registration online will also make it more convenient for folks to participate in elections.

I've heard a lot of talk this session about the need to reduce the workload of our Election Administrators. If that is the case, then I urge you not to do it by turning people away at the polls. Let's instead focus on good bills like this one that address a viable solution to increasing workloads, and that's the implementation of a cost-effective and efficient resource like online voter registration. It would be a fiscally responsible investment in Montana that will further improve the integrity of our elections.

***Here's how it would work:***

First and foremost, this bill allows online voter registration to only those Montanans who possess a valid, Montana driver's license or ID card. When applying for a Montana driver's license or ID, the applicant must provide:

- Proof of identity (2 documents required)
- Proof of Montana residency (document that includes the applicant's name and MT residence address as it appears on the DL application)
- Proof of authorized presence (since Dec. 2005 - document includes certified birth certificate, valid passport, valid certificate of naturalization, tribal photo ID, etc.

After providing the proof required by MVD, and after being issued a MT driver's license or ID, the individual becomes eligible to register to vote online. It's as simple, secure and convenient as that!

I'd like for it to be clear that under current Montana law, a person does not have to appear in person, or show their ID, in order to register to vote. In fact, at least 32% of individuals register without ever appearing in person at the county election office.

Montanans have never had to appear in person or show their ID to register to vote. It has only been since the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 that an ID number has even been required in order to register. To clarify, Montanans do not show their ID, they write their ID number on their voter registration card. For voter registration purposes, a valid ID number is either a driver's license number or the last four digits of a social security number.

The online voter registration system would capture all the required information from the individual and the Motor Vehicles Division for a paperless transfer to the county election office. This paperless transfer would include the individual's affirmation that they meet the eligibility requirements to register to vote, and the electronic signature on file with the MVD. Once they receive the electronic transfer, county election officials will use the



current system to review and approve the forms that were submitted online, and process the application just as they would any paper application. The difference is that they wouldn't have to try to decipher illegible printing or enter any of the information into the statewide system by hand.

It would be a streamlined process compared to the current paper-based system, and it will help to minimize the workload for counties, eliminate incomplete registrations and errors in the database, and improve access to voting.

In recent years, we've enhanced Montana's elections process through the use of new technology to ensure that every Montanan has access to elections – yet our voter registration process remains in the virtual dark ages.

- Voters can now go online to review their voter registration information, the status of their absentee ballot, and even view a precinct-specific sample ballot for all state and federal elections with [My Voter Page](#).
- Montana's military and overseas citizen electors can now apply for a ballot, receive a precinct-specific ballot, vote their ballot and return their ballot online through the Electronic Absentee System, which was implemented in 2010.
- Candidates have the ability to file their Declarations for Nomination and campaign finance information online.
- We also place election resources online – including the Voter Information Pamphlet, candidate forms, statistics, and the Primary and General Election results.

Offering voter registration online is a clear step in the right direction. It will increase transparency and get more Montana citizens registered to vote, so that every election in our state reflects the will of the people.

I urge you to support the fundamental right for all eligible Montanans to easily participate in elections by making the registration system more efficient and cost-effective.

Vote "yes" on Senate Bill 206. Thank you for your time.